

# Mishkan R'Fuah: Where Healing Resides

## A conversation with Rabbi Eric Weiss

BY MARK MACKLER

CSZ member Rabbi Eric Weiss serves as CEO/President of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center. Rabbi Weiss has edited a new book *Mishkan R'Fuah: Where Healing Resides* (Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2013.) I recently visited Rabbi Weiss in his office, and here is an edited version of our discussion.

**MM:** There are approximately 80 short prayers that comprise the book, and they are grouped into three sections: Building a Tent of Healing, Entering a Tent of Healing, and Living in a Tent of Healing. How did these groups come about?

**RW:** Most ideas, especially ideas related to spirituality, need an “architecture” or structure for easier comprehension. This concept is similar to *Mishkan T'filah*, the Reform prayer book. These were the three groups that worked best for the prayers: building a tent, entering a tent and living in a tent. Because the word “mishkan” means tent or temporary dwelling place, and it is a word the Reform movement has used in its liturgical vision, we wanted to build on it metaphorically in a way that was authentic to the experience of illness and other moments of vulnerability in our common human experience. However, just as life is a journey with good times and bad times, we may think about the three groups as being porous; that is ultimately the nature of metaphor and poetry itself. And so, the three *mishkans* are rather ambiguous. That is, at different times in our lives the various prayers might very well fall into different *mishkans*.

**MM:** *Where Healing Resides* is a wonderful mix of traditional Hebrew prayer and modern language and imagery. Did you do this in order to appeal to the broadest readership possible?

**RW:** Yes, I thought that it was very important to connect with as many readers as I could.

**MM:** In a similar vein, one of the things that struck me

is how non-Jews can benefit from your selections and feel entirely comfortable with them.

**RW:** That's right. The book is “Jewish” within a theological framework, but the message certainly is not. Because I spend a lot of time thinking about and working with this level of life I developed a term: natural spiritual hunger as a way to express that everyone has a spiritual component within themselves. And Reform Judaism is

always seeking to find a healthy balance between theology and spirituality.

**MM:** One of the most exciting experiences for me as I read the book was how often I stepped back and said “Wow, I never thought of that.” You've included prayers for an individual to say before he begins his prison term. You've included prayers for healing from mental illness, prayers upon receiving a diagnosis of dementia, and so on. You've even included a very touching child's “Mi Shebeirach.” How did these prayers find their way into *Mishkan R'Fuah*?

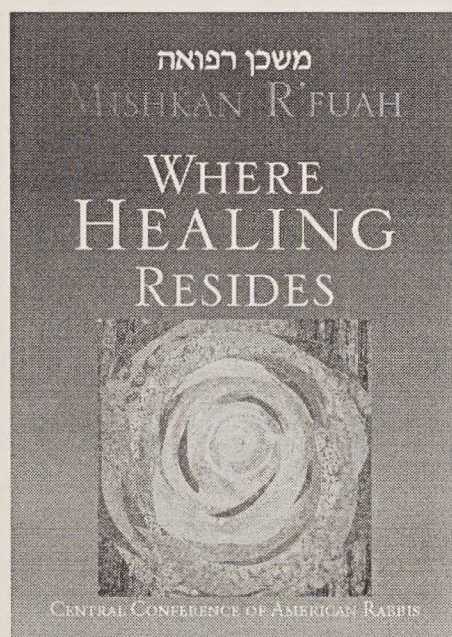
**RW:** Rabbis deal with humanity at all levels. We have to be honest about Jews and our experiences in the world,

good or not so good. Once we shake loose our stereotypes, we can create the appropriate prayers. You know, we Jews have mental illness and we very same Jews can also have cancer.

**MM:** A good interviewer never injects his point of view into the interview, but I will anyway. Personally, one prayer that leapt off the page to me is “Needing Help”: “God, I don't like to be helped. It makes me feel like I am a burden and a nuisance...Let me do all that I can for myself. But give me the wisdom to know the difference between self-reliance and foolhardiness. Amen.” I guess I'm just a typical guy, no?

**RW:** Well, plenty of women feel the same way! But isn't it important to recognize the spiritual undercurrents at work?

**MM:** There are three readings from CSZ: “A Prayer for Those Who Help,” “Coming Out of Dark Places,” and “On Miscarriage or Stillbirth.” Did you (continued on page 7)





# Prayer Practice



**THE COLD**, dark and (we hope) rainy winter season is here and, though we know it will pass, for most of us this is also a time when we feel an intense longing for light and warmth. Even as the weather becomes dreary, we look for ways to brighten and expand our lives.

For Jews, prayer in community is one way we overcome the gloom that threatens our ability to see joy and beauty in the world. A student of mine once asked, "Why should we pray? What good does it do?" I might have replied, "Because we cannot help it," and stopped there. It has been my experience that prayer is a natural response to the vagaries of the world, in the same way one's mouth waters with the smell of food or as a sunflower turns towards the light. We pray because that is what we do.

But a question like this deserves a fuller answer. Why do we pray?

In the first place, prayer is a way of increasing our sensitivity to the spiritual aspects of life; prayer encourages us to give voice to the awe we feel in the presence of the mystery. From this point of view, prayer practice is very much like exercise.

One's muscles become responsive by training.

A soccer player will play scrimmage day after day until she begins to be able to sense what the other side is going to do almost before they do it. Or, if you want to learn to appreciate art, you not only go to look at it but try your hand producing some, painting a picture or molding a statue and suddenly become conscious of all that is involved in the play of form, light and shadow, color and depth. Or take a few piano lessons and then go to the concert to hear a great pianist. Suddenly you're far more conscious than ever before of the movement of hands, and interpretation of the music. Exercise of any sort enlarges the capacity to understand, to appreciate, to react.

My teacher Rabbi Robert Kahn wrote "the soul is stretched and enlarged by prayer just as the body is stretched and enlarged by physical exercise." So it is that the Psalmist wrote, "God open my eyes that I may see truth and beauty in all your world and your spirit in all things."

And we, too, ask God to open our lips that our mouths

may pour forth words of praise before the prayer known as *HaTefillah* (The Prayer), or the Amidah. We ask for a little encouragement to get us going if the gratitude ain't yet flowin'.

And then, right away we remind ourselves—some say we remind God—how we came to stand here reciting Hebrew in the first place. We come from a long line of ancestors that takes us back to Abraham and Sarah. We may not amount to much but we humbly ask that God please consider Your abiding promise and great love for our forebears! Help us for their sake!

Prayer practice gives a chance to recalibrate ourselves. Prayer is a way of aspiration. It is a way of lifting ourselves, of getting a higher look, of transcending our immediate circumstance and glimpsing the bigger picture. Often, after prayer, we can see our situation and the next correct action with greater clarity.

While it is certainly possible to pray alone, for Jews community strengthens us and our prayers. Exercise your prayer muscles during these long winter months by taking on the practice of attending services regularly. Join your community as we stretch our spirits.

In this new year 2014, my prayers include you. I pray that God will accompany each and every one of us in our daily pursuits. And that in difficult moments, we will know that we have an Eternal Friend encouraging us toward our holy aspirations. May our opportunities to learn and grow together be many!

Rabbi Camille

## Welcome to New Members:

Steffanie Lehr Burkhard

Andy McDonald

Dena Plotkin and her children Jones & Langston

### Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

290 Dolores Street  
San Francisco CA 94103

VOICE 415-861-6932

FAX 415-861-6081

EMAIL [regina@shaarzahav.org](mailto:regina@shaarzahav.org)

WEB <http://www.shaarzahav.org>

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, and the San Francisco Organizing Project



### Sha'ar Zahav Staff

RABBI Camille Shira Angel  
(x301) [rabbicamilleangel@gmail.com](mailto:rabbicamilleangel@gmail.com)

CANTOR Sharon Bernstein  
(x308) [cantorbernstein@gmail.com](mailto:cantorbernstein@gmail.com)

ADMINISTRATOR Regina Wurst  
(x303) [regina@shaarzahav.org](mailto:regina@shaarzahav.org)

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S  
AND FAMILY EDUCATION Rebecca Weiner  
(x302) [Rebecca@shaarzahav.org](mailto:Rebecca@shaarzahav.org)

### Officers

PRESIDENT James Carlson  
[president@shaarzahav.org](mailto:president@shaarzahav.org)

VICE PRESIDENTS Ruth Bernstein,  
Erika Katske,  
Beth Ross

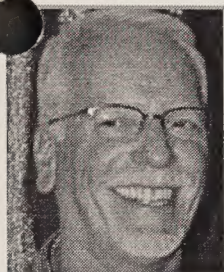
RECORDER Barbara Cymrot  
TREASURER Mark Pressler

### Va'ad Members

Ann Bauman, Patty Caplan, Michael Che,  
Andy Fyne, Sara Haber, Richard Meyerson,  
Nancy Levin, Laura Lowe, Andrew Ramer,  
Karen Schiller (Immediate Past President)



# Is God Obstinate?



**THE RANDOM** House Dictionary contains the following definition:

**Obstinate**—adj. 1. Firmly or stubbornly adhering to one's purpose, opinion, etc.; not yielding to argument, persuasion or

entreaty. 2. Characterized by inflexible persistence or an unyielding attitude. 3. Not easily controlled or overcome.

If you look in a dictionary of musical terms, you can find "*Ostinato*," which in Italian means obstinate. But when used in a musical score, it has a somewhat different meaning. Musically, *ostinato* indicates a passage with repeated notes or rhythms, often adding intensity and building suspense or drama. Familiar examples of *ostinato* can be heard in Ravel's *Bolero* and the theme from the movie *Jaws*.

The two words—obstinate and *ostinato*—derive from the same root but have divergent meanings. One adjective conveys the image of a grumpy old man with a scowl on his face. The other is something that conveys passion and excitement. I'm speculating that to be obstinate in a musical sense is to unyieldingly present a theme with vigor and persistence. It's performed in a way that demands the listener's attention.

Interesting, but what is the relevance to God?

I see relevance in the rhythm and structure of the Erev Shabbat service. At the beginning of the service, we light candles, officially entering into Shabbat space and time. Then we welcome the Sabbath Queen with L'cha Dodi. From there, the service progresses, the rhythm builds, and we start addressing God in different ways, such as Creator and Ruler, repeatedly expressing our hopes and our thanks with an intensity that builds *ostinato*, like a musical score.

That intensity, that excitement, tends to increase when we know more about the service, and when we are more familiar with the liturgy and the Hebrew. If you're looking to increase your connection with our prayer services, that opportunity is knocking at your door. Cantor Sharon Bernstein has initiated "Lattes & Liturgy," an engaging series focused on learning about and discussing prayer. On the third Saturday morning of the month, Cantor Sharon leads a very informal group at Sha'ar Zahav designed to provoke your thoughts and expand

your understanding of the Shabbat liturgy. Since the discussion doesn't necessarily build on the previous session, you don't have to come to every gathering to be part of the conversation—but we hope you will.

Discussing liturgy seems to naturally evolve into an examination of the purpose of prayer and to whom prayer is addressed. How often do you pay attention to the words that we read, chant, or sing? How often do you think about the God to whom they're directed—a God characterized as loving, compassionate, but also stubborn, jealous, vengeful? Is this a God we could call obstinate? Or *ostinato*? Or both? Is this a God that you actually feel connected to, or believe in?

In the coming year Sha'ar Zahav will be hosting a Shabbaton to talk about God—in and out of liturgy. Our Maggid, Andrew Ramer, has conceived a day of looking at prayers and other texts, talking about God as someone we believe in, or don't believe in, as someone we have experienced or someone we would like to experience.

Please come enjoy the coffee and conversation at Cantor Bernstein's "Lattes & Liturgy" sessions and watch for more information on the Shabbaton.

Personally, I find God to be much more *ostinato* than obstinate. But we can talk about that in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Thanks to Regina Wurst, our Administrator, Sha'ar Zahav raised over \$2,000 for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines at a fun dinner attended by 25 people. Regina made the chicken soup, some CSZ members contributed salad, muffins, cookies, cake and fried bananas, while others helped with cooking and preparation. With advice from Tony Enriquez, Cantor Bernstein made a CD of Filipino music for us to enjoy while we ate. Members were asked to make a donation to attend the dinner, and some people who couldn't attend made a donation anyway. The money was donated to the Jewish Community Federation's Typhoon Haiyan Relief Fund. People hung out for a couple of hours talking and eating – all for a good cause.

## Task Force Leaders

**MEMBERSHIP** Ruth Bernstein  
[membershiptf@shaarzahav.org](mailto:membershiptf@shaarzahav.org)  
**CONNECTIONS** Barbara Cymrot  
[connections@shaarzahav.org](mailto:connections@shaarzahav.org)

## Jewish Gaily Forward

**EDITORIAL TEAM** Annys Bone, Paul Cohen,  
 Francie McGowan, Mark Mackler, Karen  
 Schiller, Sharyn Saslowsky, Elliott Vogel,  
 Regina Wurst  
**DESIGN AND LAYOUT** Jonathan Wieder  
 ([design@JonathanWieder.com](mailto:design@JonathanWieder.com))

The Jewish Gaily Forward is published six times a year by Congregation Sha'ar Zahav: January 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, September 1, and November 1. The deadline for submissions is one month prior to the publication date: December 1, February 1, April 1, June 1,

August 1, and October 1. All submissions to the JGF must meet editorial and length requirements. Specifications supplied upon request.

Permission to reprint with attribution is granted. Articles reflect the opinion of their authors and not those of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. Proofing errors will be atoned for each Yom Kippur.

**ADVERTISERS:** contact Regina Wurst, Administrator, at 415-861-6932 or [regina@shaarzahav.org](mailto:regina@shaarzahav.org). Congregation Sha'ar Zahav reserves the right to reject any ad.  
 Volume 33, issue 3



# Community Health Forum at Sha'ar Zahav

BY KEVIN DILLON

A few years ago, Sha'ar Zahav members actively engaged with San Francisco government officials to convince them to implement Healthy SF, a program designed to make health care services available and affordable to uninsured San Francisco residents. With the impending implementation of national healthcare reform, there are important questions about what will happen to Healthy SF. Also, given changes in state healthcare funding and the aging community in San Francisco, it is important for the city to address how it will take care of its seniors.

On Tuesday, November 19th, members of various San Francisco faith communities gathered at Sha'ar Zahav for the Community Health Forum, an event sponsored by the San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP). At the forum, community members made a compelling case to safeguard Healthy SF (including the Employer Spending Requirement (ESR)) and to address issues of aging within San Francisco.

We had a great lineup of speakers at the forum, coming from a variety of congregations throughout the city. Rabbi Angel began with an opening reflection and by declaring a Public Covenant of Care, where we are all responsible for ensuring healthcare for all. After the opening, we heard a number of powerful testimonies about the need for healthcare in the city. Samantha Romero from St. Mary's Cathedral spoke about undocumented workers, who are not covered under the national health care reform and so rely on Healthy SF for coverage. This impressive 19-year-old is herself a DREAMer (a student who would be eligible for citizenship under the federal DREAM bill), and completed a 285-mile walk on the behalf of immigrants' rights.

Mary Sperber from Congregation Sherith Israel proved that there are businesses that want to keep Healthy SF as well, and to

help improve the law. Along with her husband David, Mary is the proud owner of Town's End Restaurant and happily provides healthcare for her employees. She admitted that the current law comes with onerous bureaucracy for businesses and she would like to see the law improved and expanded.

CSZ member and SFOP leader Dana Vinicoff provided a very informative report on the state of healthcare in San Francisco. With the state's 10% cut in healthcare funding for San Francisco, nine senior day care centers in the city are in danger of shutting down. With the highest age per capita of any city in California, and a population of which 40% are expected to be over 65 years old by 2030, this is dire news and underscores the need for preserving existing health infrastructure for seniors in the city. Dana also explained how a current loophole in the ESR allows unscrupulous employers to actually pocket money intended for their employees' healthcare.

After we heard these powerful stories and statistics, it became clear that it was important to make sure elected officials would help protect and improve Healthy SF and senior day care centers in the city. Fr. Richard Smith from St. John the Evangelist was able to get all officials present, including SF supervisors David Campos and David Chiu, and Colleen Chawla, deputy director of the Public Health Department, to commit to three things. The first was to close the existing loophole in the ESR, the second was to help make Healthy SF easier for businesses to comply with, and the third was to help secure the nine senior day health care centers in San Francisco. Further, Tom Nolan of the Board of Supervisors' Taskforce on Aging agreed to share their report with SFOP community members for approval and community input before submitting the report to the Board.

All in all, there was great turnout both by elected officials and community members. By the end of the meeting, signatures covered the poster of the Public Covenant of Care, a hopeful sign for the future.

## Cantor Sharon Bernstein Joins Music in the Mishkan!

Our own Cantor Sharon Bernstein will join Music in the Mishkan this season, singing Yiddish songs by Mark Warshawsky, Mordechai Gebirtig and other great Jewish composers. Randy Weiss and The Bridge Players are delighted to welcome Sharon and her golden voice to the chamber series, which is celebrating its 15th season! The three concerts are January 19, March 9, and June 1—mark your calendars.

Other highlights of the season include a concert of string sextets by Brahms, Strauss and Korngold on January 19, Schubert's monumental E flat major Piano Trio on March 9, and Dvorak's lush F minor Piano Trio on June 1.

All concerts begin at 4:00 pm, followed by a wine and cheese reception. You can order tickets by calling the office at (415) 861-6932, or by finding a link on the CSZ website ([www.shaarzahav.org](http://www.shaarzahav.org)). The full programs are listed below. Don't miss these beautiful concerts in our lovely sanctuary!

### Sunday, January 19 "Harmony"

String Sextet from *Capriccio*-Richard Strauss  
String Sextet in D major, Op. 10-Erich Korngold  
String Sextet in B flat major, Op. 18-Johannes Brahms

### Sunday, March 9 "Melody"

Café Music-Paul Schoenfield  
Great Yiddish Poets in Song-Mark Warshawsky  
Piano Trio in E flat major, D. 929-Franz Schubert

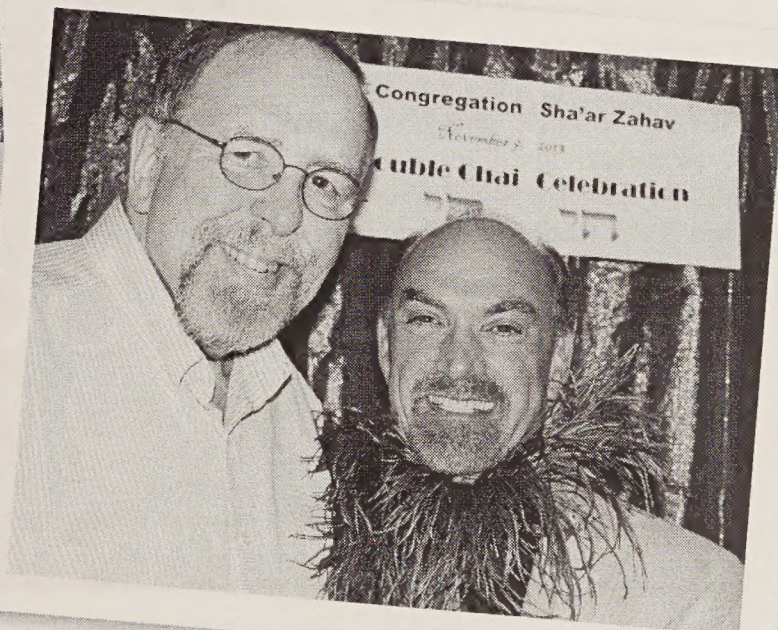
### Sunday, June 1 "Rhythm"

Piano Trio in G major, Op. 1, No. 2-Ludwig van Beethoven  
Great Yiddish Poets in Song-Mordechai Gebirtig  
Piano Trio in F minor, Op. 65-Antonin Dvorak



# Celebrating Sha'ar Zahav at Double Chai!

Everyone agreed: Sha'ar Zahav's Double Chai event celebrating our 36th anniversary was a fabulous party. Many thanks to Wendy Brummer and Andy Fyne who did an incredible job making it all happen. People ate, drank and danced the night away. Here are just a few pictures. check out our Facebook page to see more. (photos by Marcie Prohovsky)





# Introducing the B'nei Mitzvah

## Itai Boydak-Yates



Itai will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on February 15, 2014. Itai is a seventh grader at Montera Middle School in Oakland. He does many things in his free time from collecting bottle caps and coins to running track with CA Track Club. He enjoys playing the clarinet, and he loves to read classic literature, from Homer to Orwell. He is very happy in nature, likes traveling, and has gone to

Camp Tawonga for several years. He is also very devoted to school, and he likes learning about science and history.

Itai's mitzvah projects have included birthday and Hanukkah donations to places such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Eden Project, volunteering for Meals on Wheels and the San Francisco Food Bank, and doing beach clean-ups. He and his family would like to thank his mentors, Randy Weiss and Andrew Ramer, as well as Cantor Sharon Bernstein and the B'nei Mitzvah Chavurah.

## Ella Rosenblatt



Ella Rosenblatt is excited about being called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on March 1, 2014. A 7th grader at Rooftop Alternative School, Ella's favorite subjects are art, math, and literature. She played soccer for four years and now runs on the school's track team. She recently started guitar lessons and loves it – a used guitar is her most treasured Hanukkah present.

Along with her love of music and art, Ella is a strong supporter of animal rights. This year she became a vegan and spends time reading and researching about this topic and animal rights in general. She's even starting to teach friends at school about involvement in animal rights and veganism. Last year, she raised \$1,000 for the Humane Society to support their work on puppy mills. Penny and Buddy, her two rescue dogs, are her faithful companions. They along with her parents, greatly enjoy her constant singing at home. Ella is a proud Tawongan; summer can't get here fast enough for her.

## FAMILY LAW

### PRACTICE AREAS

Divorce  
Domestic  
Partner  
Dissolution

Separation  
Property &  
Pension  
Distribution  
Alimony

Custody  
Visitation  
Child Support  
Restraining

Orders  
Paternity  
Pre-Marital  
Agreements

Post-Divorce  
Disputes  
Modification  
of Orders  
Appeals

▼  
We recognize that a Family Law matter is one of the most difficult challenges that you may face—whether in a traditional or alternative family setting.

PERSONAL ATTENTION  
THOUGHTFUL LITIGATION  
FINAL RESOLUTION



**Schoenberg**  
FAMILY LAW GROUP, P.C.

180 Montgomery Street | Suite 1800 | SF, CA 94104 | 415.834.1120 [www.sflg.com](http://www.sflg.com)



# Journey with Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer

Rebecca Weiner Educator



**AS I WRITE** this article, Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is in the beginning of our new unit “Jewish Journeys.” For Jews, taking a journey is a central part of our experience. We see journeys reflected in the Torah, in our history and in the unwinding of our individual lives. There are epic Jewish journeys such as going into Babylonian exile or immigrating to the United States. There are more personal journeys such as walking to shul on Shabbat or spending a day taking in Jewish art at the Contemporary Jewish Museum. There are journeys of our souls, hearts, and minds, and of course, our stomachs too.

In my capacity as the Director of Education for Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, I care deeply that the Jewish journeys that my students and their families embark on are meaningful, content rich and safe. Most importantly, I want them to be so joyful and engaging that they stimulate a lifelong yearning to continue learning. Many of the journeys that Jews have embarked on in history have been reactive: fleeing a bad situation or changing a part of their practice to contort to their environment. I think we are profoundly lucky to live in a time when our journeys can be proactive. We can choose our destination or desired experience and follow myriad paths to get there.

Among the families I encounter, many who are interested in the Jewish education aspect of their journey are a little surprised by the vastness of Jewish possibilities that are present in the 21st century, and the ability to create their own Jewish journey landscape. They often ask me shyly, “This will be better than the experience I had, right?” I always reply with a heartfelt “YES.”

So here we are, mid-year, and we have started this incredible Jewish journey together. We will call it “Making Judaism relevant to young people and their families.” We will go on this journey during an increasingly technology-laden time. We will push past our own resistance, our struggles to maintain our already hectic lives and yet still make time for Jewish enrichment for our families. We will do this because we know that this is in keeping with every significant Jewish journey that has had its obstacles. The Talmud exists because living in the diaspora demanded that an oral tradition become a written one. Today we have to create a Judaism that will fit into the secular structure of our lives and add value. It is a worthy journey and perhaps the desire to keep shifting and growing our tradition is why it has survived all these centuries.

Creating a meaningful and joyous Jewish journey that lasts is greatly informed by the people you travel with. That is why we spend so much time at Beit Sefer helping our students and families connect with one another. You want your community to be a place that you learn together, nosh together and go through life’s ups and downs together. This is why we have built in a myriad of opportunities to get to know each other. There are chavurot, Lattes and Liturgy, Shabbat Simcha and Opening Circle to enjoy together. We

want our students to feel an ethical obligation toward leading lives that make pursuing social justice central. We reinforce this each week at Beit Sefer by making social issues relevant (even to kindergartners) and reminding each other that while we may not finish the work, neither can we shy away from it. We create a Judaism that is sensual, full of sound and taste and touch. The feel of the yad in your hand, the smell of Havdallah spices, the taste of challah freshly baked by small hands. We hope to pique the curiosity of our students, probing their minds, at every developmental stage, leaning over a piece of text and asking them: what does this mean to YOU? We urge them to add their voices to the generations, to understand that commentary is still being made and they are an important part of what is going to shape Judaism in the future.

We embark on this journey by opening the hearts of our students to a love of Judaism and letting their souls feel with intention and their mouths fill with prayer. We position them at this amazing point in Jewish history where they flourish sandwiched between the voices of their ancestors and the futures that await them. We go on this journey because we know our lives will be richer for it, our connections deeper and because we have chosen it. We may not know exactly where it leads; in the moment, it is sometimes hard to know what will be at the end of any journey. However, we know our faith and our intention will help guide us on our way. Each day we start this journey and we return to it and we start again. We remember and we remind our children, it is a blessing to go on this journey and it is a gift. It is such a gift to be able to fill your heart and mind and soul with Judaism, so that each step we take is another Shecheyanu. *N’siyah tovah*, may your journeys be good ones.

## Mishkan R’Fuah

(continued from page 1)

make these selections simply because they fit into their respective *mishkans*, or because you felt a need to have an adequate representation from CSZ?

**RW:** Believe me, there was no such thing as a CSZ quota!

**MM:** One final question. Over my career I’ve worked on committees, and sometimes there have been disagreements among committee members. This terrific book is a product of a committee. Were there any disagreements?

**RW:** No, none. I was called to write and edit the book and to help oversee the committee. Rabbi Hara Person (who is the director of the CCAR Press) and I spent a lot of time constructing the book and asking the committee for guidance. We even field-tested some pieces. There was deep and gracious goodwill. We realized that the Jewish landscape is changing and shifting, and we recognized the need for a book designed for private, experiential reflection. By the way, I believe this book represents the first time that the CCAR Press approached a non-pulpit rabbi as editor of a movement-wide liturgical canon.



# Our Legacy Community

## *A Thank You to My Community*

BY MARIANNE BALIN

**M**ost of you don't know me, but let me tell you something intimate. I've bequeathed Congregation Sha'ar Zahav \$10,000 in my will. Amazing to me I can even use the word "bequeath" in relationship to my financial status. Will it be there when I am gone? Maybe. If I live a long time maybe all the money will be gone. But if there's anything left, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav will have some.

I am a philanthropist—by trade and by predilection. In my will, I have chosen and named several organizations that do work that I endorse and want to see continue. Why Congregation Sha'ar Zahav?

I joined CSZ shortly after I came out at age 40. (You may ask me about that later.) I'd been congregation shopping when a friend told me about Sha'ar Zahav. I joined a picnic potluck presided over by the most wonderful Phyllis Mintzer. At the time, I was recently divorced and had two daughters, Annie (6 then, now 27) and Nora (3 then and now 24). Phyllis wrapped us in love and CSZ gave me a framework for providing a gay normative Jewish home for my girls. Dayenu.

Then there was the time I realized that I could rearrange the furniture. I was part of a group of congregants who had volunteered to set up an event in the sanctuary. Alone for a moment in that big space, my inner event planning voice called out that

the pews had to be moved. Who could I ask for permission? I asked myself—and then gave myself permission, suddenly a decision-maker in the congregation. I owned the place—these were my pews. I took my place in the community. Dayenu.

And then there was the fundraising. I was put up to this purpose by my now forever friend, Tony Harris. He said, "If you will, I will" and I said ok. We stepped out together into the circle of attention at one summer's Leadership Advance. Having become Development Chairs, we worked our tails off for several years. Much of what we invented seems to have lasted. The Rainbow Fund persists. And that was our ticket you tore at High Holidays. (You did, didn't you?) This makes me proud. Dayenu.

And then there are the circles of friends—the have dinner-with's, the hug brigade, the wish you the best forever troop. The families my kids went to Hebrew School with remain dear to me. And all you members I've not yet met—I look forward to the opportunity to get to know you better—knowing that I have the privilege of asking gently nosy questions based on our joint membership and my silver hair. One thing I can say about Sha'ar Zahav: the passing scene is always interesting. And if you dig in, our community is full of people of merit doing good work to continually make a better world. Dayenu

At CSZ I've had the opportunity to reflect on community. I've learned that a congregational community changes over time as some good friends wander off and (continued on page 9)

## Tu B'Shevat

BY ANDREW RAMER

**I**t's puzzling to me that Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is held on the first day of the seventh month, not the first day of the first month, which was our new year in ancient times. And our calendar has two other new years, the first of Elul for tithing cattle (which almost no one knows about) and a new year in the month of Shevat, the date the rabbis of old determined for counting the age of trees for the purpose of determining how much of their harvest to tithe.

Why do we celebrate the holiday in the middle of the month, rather than at the beginning of the month? In ancient times, the School of Hillel decided on the Fifteenth of Shevat, which is what the holiday's name—Tu B'Shevat—means in Hebrew. They picked the 15th because two other agrarian holidays occur on the 15th, Sukkot and Pesach. Spring begins in that season in the Middle East, but in ancient times there were no rituals around this day, although the Talmud does prohibit

fasting. It wasn't until the 15th century that special ceremonies were created by the Jewish mystics who had gathered together in the city of Safed, inspired in part by a verse from the book of Deuteronomy 20:19—"For a person is like a tree of the field."

The Tu B'Shevat seder is patterned on a Passover seder, and also on the less-known seders held at Rosh Hashanah which feature foods that grow in abundance to symbolize a prosperous new year. The mystics of Safed created a feast centered around the seven fruits and grains that grow in the holy land, which are listed in Deuteronomy: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and the dates that were used to make honey. Along with those foods, four cups of wine were consumed, one red, one white, one more red than white and one more white than red. And other foods were consumed with different rituals established in different communities.

Today, Tu B'Shevat is thought of as the Jewish Arbor Day. As human abuse of the planet increases, this holiday is becoming more and more important as a time for us to study about and take action on healing our world.



others join. What's at the core is a sense of community that needs to be cultivated and renewed. Money helps—it keeps the lights on and the building in good repair, it provides salaries for staff and funds to create innovative programming. I chose to name Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in my will in the

hopes that I can leave a little legacy and a thank you to the Sha'ar Zahav community. Join me—it feels great. Give Irene Ogus a call (415-305-4286) or drop her a line (irene.ogus@gmail.com) to discuss your intentions. Or better yet, surprise her with your legacy gift as a *fait accompli*.

## Our condolences to:

Steve Elman, Tom Holt and Phil Charney  
on the death of their friend, Ron Spector  
Sharyn Saslafsky on the death of her friend  
Anita Sanchez  
The family and friends of former member,  
Anita Rosenfeld  
The family and friends of former member,  
Ron Moskowitz  
Jay Cohen on the death of his father, Phillip  
Cohen  
Laureen Kim on the death of her brother,  
Dennis Kim

## Member Yahrzeits

### January

3 Aaron Nacamulli  
9 Jerome Davis  
14 Harry Clint Bigglestone  
18 Keith Fenton  
20 George Ash  
26 Cheryl Orvis  
27 Bill Ashley-Dobbin  
28 Nathan Eli Weinstein

### February

1 Steven Richter  
2 Stephen Walters  
4 John Atteridg  
6 Ronald Wilmot  
10 Helga Hahn  
14 Ziggy Gimnichner  
14 Allen Harris  
14 Barbara Rosenblum  
15 Allan Ellis  
17 Jason Gaber  
23 Leland Vogel  
25 Evelyn Slenker

**g3mh**

GOLDSTEIN  
GELLMAN, MELBOSTAD  
HARRIS & McSPARRAN  
LLP

1388 SUTTER STREET, SUITE 1000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109  
(415) 673-5600 TEL  
(415) 673-5606 FAX  
www.g3mh.com



## LEGAL HELP?

ESTATE PLANNING  
BUSINESS LAW  
REAL ESTATE  
LITIGATION  
CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION  
TENANCY-IN-COMMON  
PROBATE  
PERSONAL INJURY  
EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

**David Gellman**  
DGellman@g3mh.com

**Arthur Meirson**  
AMeirson@g3mh.com



### 36th Anniversary Donations

Ruth Berstein & Matthew Patchell  
 Patricia Caplan & Jonathan Simonoff  
 James Carlson  
 Michael Chertok  
 Bernard Choden & Lois Scott  
 Kevin Dillon  
 Avraham Giannini  
 Allan Gold & Alan Ferrara  
 Alan Gordon & J. Steven Schumacher  
 Marius Greenspan  
 Alice Harron  
 Alex Ingersoll & Martin Tannenbaum  
 Samuel K. Kaplan  
 Lisa Katz  
 Ron Lezell  
 Jeffrey Lilly  
 Florence & Steven Nacamulli  
 Karren Shorofsky & Carolyn Reiser  
 Ami Zusman

### Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer

James Carlson in memory of Janice  
 Terry Figur Greenberg.

### Cantor's Discretionary Fund

Wendy Brummer in gratitude for Cantor  
 Bernstein's sweet and helpful support:  
 "You are a gem from God!"  
 Tamar Gershon in honor of Cantor  
 Bernstein  
 Sharyn Saslafsky in honor of the  
 wedding of Andrea Guerra & Shoshana  
 Levenberg.

### Chai Cantor

Ann Bauman & Kelly Thiemann  
 Robert Bernardo  
 Wendy Brummer  
 Jonathan Funk & John Arnold  
 Laura Lowe  
 Karen Schiller  
 Martin Tannenbaum & Alex Ingersoll  
 Irene Tannenbaum  
 Kelly Thiemann

### The Rabbi Julius & Pearl Funk Musical Events Fund

James Carlson in honor of the wedding of  
 Mark Mackler & Wendell Choo.  
 in honor of the wedding of Mark Pressler  
 & Robert Tannenbaum.  
 in memory of Jan Haber, mother of Sara  
 Haber and mother-in-law of Beth Sousa.  
 in memory of Rita Roginski.  
 in memory of Robert Roginski.

John Arnold in honor of Jon Funk on the  
 occasion of Hanukkah.

Jonathan Funk & John Arnold in honor  
 of Mark Mackler and Wendell Choo's  
 wedding.

in honor of Mark Blecher & Lary  
 Aasheim's wedding.

in honor of Shoshana Levenberg &  
 Andrea Guerra's wedding.

in honor of Cantor Sharon Bernstein  
 and the Shabbes Beat musicians.

Sharyn Saslafsky in honor of Mark  
 Mackler and Wendell Choo's wedding.

### General Fund

David Bezanilla

Allan Berenstein in memory of Rabbi  
 Ben Marcus and John Golebowski.

Loren Bialek in honor of Harriet Rafter.

James Carlson in memory of Arnie  
 Jackson

Pam Erwin in honor of Paul Cohen, Ora  
 Prochovnick and Rose Katz, for their  
 incredible leadership and support of her  
 journey.

Samuel & Lisl Gershon in honor of the  
 Bat Mitzvah of their granddaughter,  
 Eliana Gershon.

Neil Hart in memory of his father,  
 Charles Hart.

Ira Hirschfield & Tom Hansen

Lishmah Foundation / Mark S. Lipsitz

Mark Mackler & Wendell Choo in honor  
 of Allan Berenstein.

Martin Newman & Sandra Mackler in  
 honor of Mark Mackler and Wendell  
 Choo's wedding.

Ora Prochovnick & Rena Frantz in  
 honor of Pam Erwin's Welcoming.

in memory of Janice Greenberg.

Karen Schiller

Dennis Ybarra in honor of the wedding  
 of Mark Pressler & Robert  
 Tannenbaum.

Ami Zusman in memory of her mother,  
 Hilda Saperstein.

### High Holiday Donations

Pierre & Yvette Adida

Stan Adler for Kol Nidre.

Jessie Ap'neva & Nina Wouk

Kimberly Bancroft

Judith Bell & Jim Greenberg

Sara Beroff & Evan Richards

Elliot Block in memory of his father,  
 Herman Pip Block.

Patricia Caplan & Jonathan Simonoff

James Carlson

Prudence Carter

Dan Chesir

Wendell Choo

Helen Cohen & Mark Lipman

Paul Cohen & Bob Gutterman

Eileen Dunn

Ron Edelman

Lynn Eden & Ruth Schoenback

James Edlin & Eve Meyer

Louise Fischer

Terry Fletcher & Glen Hauer

Michael Frank

Andy Fyne

Steven Gaynes

Dana Goldberg in memory of Lahar  
 Goldberg.

Andrea Goldrich in gratitude to our  
 Congregation during the High Holidays.

Joan Goldman

Jerome Goldstein in honor of Walter  
 Leiss.

Alan Gordon & J. Steven Schumacher

Sarita Groisser

Howard & Fred Hahn

Tony Harris

Neil Hart

Marjorie Hilsenrad

Judith Huerta

Alison & Vanessa Jacoby

Robert Katz

Rose Katz

Deb Kinney

Susan Leff & Brad Post

Joan Lefkowitz & Stacey Shuster

Nancy Levin

Mark Lipschutz in honor of the wedding  
 of Andrea Guerra & Shoshana  
 Levenberg.

Gerry Llamado

David Lowe

Mark Mackler & Wendell Choo

Billie Mandel & Ryan Buchholz Mandel

Arthur Meirson

Richard Meyerson

Andrew Millican

Jeff Piade

Daniel Polinsky

Susan Reiner-Lyon in memory of Ted  
 Reiner.

Jane & Michael Rice

Jeffrey Rubin

Philip Sabes

Sharyn Saslafsky

Karen Schiller



Yo Schneeman  
 Barry Schmell  
 Susan Schwartz  
 ●ur Slepian & Gerry Llamado  
 Lisa Szer  
 Robert Tat  
 Deborah Udin & Lucy Cafalu  
 David Wasserman  
 Derek & Naomi Wetmore  
 Larry Wexler  
 Steven Wiesner  
 Debra Wilensky  
 Lisa Wuennenberg  
 David Zeeman

### Library Fund

Avraham Giannini in honor of Bernard Schertzer, Librarian Emeritus.  
 Phyllis Mintzer Education Fund  
 Pam Erwin in memory of "Phyllis' gentle way of introducing me to Judaism."

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Pam Erwin "as a thank you for all of the wonderful support for this journey."  
 Jerome Goldstein

Walter Leiss in honor of Pam Erwin's Welcoming.  
 J. Todd Ormsbee  
 Lisa Szer  
 Sam Thal  
 Hallie Waltuch

### Rainbow Fund

Tamara Abrams & Carol Barnett  
 Patricia Caplan & Jonathan Simonoff  
 Paul Cohen & Bob Gutterman  
 Andy Fyne  
 Nancy Kates in memory of Jan Haber, mother of Sara Haber.  
 Alan Michels & Laureen Kim  
 Jeff Piade  
 Nina Raff & Annie Winters  
 Yo Schneeman  
 Lisa Szer

# Charles Spiegel Law

**REAL ESTATE  
 DIVORCE AND CUSTODY  
 ADOPTION AND  
 SURROGACY  
 PRE AND POST NUPTIAL  
 AGREEMENTS**

*Charles Spiegel, Esq.,*  
 CSZ Member

Attorney and Mediator  
 CharlesSpiegelLaw@gmail.com  
 www.charlesspiegellaw.com  
 (415) 644-4555

### Nourish your values with your investments

- Holistic personal financial planning aligned with your progressive values
- Fee-only\* CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® practitioner specializing in Socially Responsible Investments
- Small business retirement plans and consulting
- Free initial consultation



**Jim Frazin, CFP®, AIF®**  
**415.337.4566 x 101**

**jim@CommunitasFinancial.com**

Jim Frazin, is an Investment Advisory Representative of Communitas Financial Planning Inc, an independent investment advisory firm registered in California. \*No product sales. 8/9/12

*Earnings Devoted to Philanthropy*

## SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL CHEVRA KADISHA

San Francisco  
 1501 Divisadero St.  
 (415) 921-3636  
 FD 262

Lafayette  
 3415 Mt. Diablo Blvd.  
 (925) 962-3636  
 FD 1523

[www.sinaichapel.org](http://www.sinaichapel.org)  
 Pre-need funeral  
 arrangements available

*Samuel L. Salkin, Executive Director  
 Helen Schwartz, Pre-need Counselor*



# Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

290 Dolores Street  
San Francisco CA 94103  
**VOICE** 415-861-6932  
**FAX** 415-861-6081  
**WEB** <http://www.shaarzahav.org>  
Rabbi Camille Shira Angel  
Cantor Sharon Bernstein



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
San Francisco, CA  
Permit # 12628

# Always Chasing Rainbows

## Cantor Sharon Bernstein

*featuring* **the Cantor Unplugged Trio**

**Carolyn Reiser, Karen Segal  
and Judy Graboyes**

**Saturday, January 25, 8:00 pm**

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav  
290 Dolores Street, San Francisco

Admission: \$10 members; \$15 non-members;  
children 12 and under free

Reception to follow

**(415) 861-6932**



[www.shaarzahav.org](http://www.shaarzahav.org)

Sponsored by The Rabbi Julius and Pearl Funk Musical Events Fund

